applications received in September & October 1995, the number of applications received in the same months in 1996 was 39,779. Further, a number of applications received by Post were found to be incomplete, resulting in delays in processing of such applications.

(c) The backlog is expected to be cleared within three months. The backlog is being cleared through employment of additional hands on a temporary basis and through longer hours being put in by existing officials. Further, a new passport office would be opened soon in Visakhapatnam and a passport collection centre is to be opened in Vijayawada.

Setting up of Standing Committee of Inter-State Council

65. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up a Standing Committee of the Inter-State Council to examine in depth contentious issues of Centre-State relations and present issue of Art. 356 for imposition of President Rules;

(b) whether the Committee is of a permanent nature; and

(c) if not, by when the Committee is expected to submit its report to Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (c) In the second meeting of the Inter-State Council held on 15.10.1996 it was recommended that there should be a Standing Committee of the Council for continuous consultations and processing of matters for the consideration of the Council. The matter is under active consideration.

Privitisation of Spinning Mills in Orissa

66. SHRI RAHAS BIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the number of spinning mills in Orissa;

(b) whether Government have privatised some of those spinning mills;

(c) the reasons for privatising those spinning mills; and

(d) whether Government propose to privatise remaining spinning mills?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) There are 13 Spinning mills in Orissa, including 1 of the NTC WBAB &O) Ltd., 1 belonging to Orissa State Textile Corporation, 3 belonging to ABS Orissa Ltd. (a subsidiary of Industrial Development Corporation of Orissa), as well as 7 in the Cooperative Sector.

(b) and (c) The mill under NTC management has not been privatised. However, the State Government of Orissa have informed that the Cooperative Spinning Mill at Gangpur in the Distt. of Sundargarh was privatised in the year 1993-94 following poor operational and financial performance, resources crunch, and in order to attract private investment.

(d) As far as the Central Government is concerned, there is no proposal to privatise any spinning mill in Orissa, at present.

राष्ट्रीय वस्त्र निगम की मिलों को लाभकारी बनाने हेतु अल्प अवधि योजना

67. **श्री राम जेठमलानी:** क्या वस्त्र मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि राष्ट्रीय वस्त्र निगम के अधीन चलाई जा रही मिलों को लाभकारी बनाने के लिए एक अल्पावधि योजना तैयार की गई है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो इस योजना का ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ग) क्या इस योजना के अधीन लाभान्वित होने वाली इकाइयों की पहचान कर ली गई है; और

(घ) यदि हां, तो ये कौन-कौन से इकाइयां हैं और यदि नहीं, तो इनकी पहचान कब तक किए जाने की संभावना है?

वस्त्र मंत्री (श्री आर. एल. जालप्पा): (क) एन. टी. सी. मिलों के पुनरूद्धार के लिए अभी तक कोई अल्पावधि योजना नहीं बनाई गई है।

(ख) से (घ) प्रश्न नहीं उठते।

Telephone and STD Facilities in Villages

68. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the telephone facilities in villages are an essential infrastructure for the development of rural sector in the country;